

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

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but the frequent repetitions and the small number of pitches made accompaniment possible, and their voices fell consistently into the fourth interval below those of the men. The women, however, enjoyed their role thoroughly and gave far better support than the men, who made little effort to coordinate their activities. 796
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The songs were arranged in a series of three verses. Each time a new house was entered, the singer started a new series. Matiwana's songs were more elaborate than Nitvary's. Occasionally the old man would make a mistake and have to start the verse over again, but these lapses merely amused him. The only musical instrument used was the tapir hoof rattle. [534]

Quain gives no detailed information on the dances involved, but apparently they were simple, and perhaps partially improvised. Nitvary was the sole person to take special pains with his toilet before leading a dance. At such a time he usually wore a feather headdress and painted his body ornately. [535]
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One of the more important parts of the *ole* ceremony was the complex of activities surrounding the *ole* posts. A few days after the ceremony began several poles were brought into the clearing just outside the village, and the bark was peeled from them. They were rubbed with white clay and painted in colored designs. Each man placed the pole he had decorated upon his shoulders and brought it into the village with shouts and singing. With the poles on their shoulders, they danced about the village, finally placing their burdens upright in holes that had been dug previously in the village plaza. The children helped by packing dirt around them. The women then smeared red *urucá* dye on the bases of the poles and just below the upper ends. Tufts of cotton were put on top by both men and women. An offering in the form of fish on *beijé* was placed in front of the posts. Later in the afternoon, and early every afternoon for the next two weeks, the men ate together among these poles. Their attitude in this ceremonial milieu was certainly not one of special reverence, for they draped two blankets Quain had given them over the posts for shade. 796
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Nearly every day additional food offerings were placed in front of the posts. One post was given special attention. This was Nukekerehe, which was said to be malignant. However, fear of Nukekerehe was mixed with jokes. Quain was told one night that the men would not go to bed until he did, for if he stayed up long Nukekerehe would surely eat him. Weeks later, when the posts were pulled up and brought into the houses of their owners, the man carrying this pole stamped his feet at the children and pretended anger, much to everyone's amusement. On one occasion Matiwana performed a ritual in which he was apparently acting the part of Nukekerehe. He made wrathful noises and jumped about in front of the post, before which were two bowls of manioc soup. [782]
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746 He then started a song about the post in which he was joined by Nitvary
243 and the women. After two repetitions, the women poured a bowl of the
522 soup on Matiwana's head and shoulders, making a dripping mess of
him. He retired amid general laughter. The second bowl of soup was
then poured over the pole. A full explanation of the beliefs surrounding
the *ole* posts was not obtained.

746 Due to the fact that Quain had only recently arrived in the village
243 when the ceremony was held, there is also a lack of clarity in the system
608 of relationships known as *ole aton*. The word "*aton*" means "pet" in Trumai,
but in the present context it applies to a temporary ceremonial identi-
fication between people, and between people and the *ole* posts. The
interpersonal ties set up were only between persons of opposite sex.
[571] However, a man could have more than one woman for *aton*, and vice
versa.

Kinship may be the determinant of these ties, but the data are in-
conclusive. Interestingly, the greatest number of *ole aton* relationships
existed between people of the previously mentioned pairs of houses,
suggesting a ceremonial reinforcement of this moiety-like arrangement.

Except for reciprocal gift-giving obligations, nothing is known of the
behavioral roles called for by these connections. The owners of the *ole*
posts were said to have their particular posts for *atons*. Their chief
ceremonial duties were to peel and paint the pole, and supply it with
[082] food offerings. It may be hypothesized that the posts represent certain
[098] spirits with which individuals are identified, perhaps as the result of
shamanistic experiences, as described by Oberg for the Kamayurá.*

746 During the *ole* ceremony, as during the cure described above, Quain
829 was impressed by the lack of interest in the proceedings. Those who
181 were not part of the immediate activity sat and smoked, indulging in
the usual topics of conversation. The loose patterning and secularity
which characterized the ritual bespoke the general lassitude that perme-
ated all aspects of the culture.

The Piquí Ceremony

746 The *piquí* (*leimon*) ceremony occurred at the end of the harvest of that
fruit, during the first half of the rainy season. It was similar to the *ole*
celebration, but not as lengthy nor as important. Quain's information on
the festival, obtained from Aloari, is very limited. Jakwanari, the main
functionary, occupied a position similar to that of Matiwana and Nitvary
in the *ole* ceremony. As Aloari phrased it, "Jakwanari had *leimon* as
aton." There was house-to-house dancing by the women, accompanied
by singing of a certain series of songs. At the end of the dancing Jak-
[262] wanari's wife made a large quantity of *f'ak*, the *piquí* flour cake, which

* *Ibid.*, p. 60.